


State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Enclosure 4b
June 21, 2012

Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

TO: Members of the Board of Regents

FROM: Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner 

RE: Non-Renewal of the Academy for Career Exploration Charter School (ACE) Charter School by the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education

The charter of the Academy for Career Exploration Charter School (ACE) expires at the conclusion of the 2012-13 school year. In accordance with the Board of Regents' Regulations Governing Public Charter Schools C-4-3, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) coordinated the process of evaluating Academy for Career Exploration Charter School (ACE) Charter School's performance over the past four years to determine the merits of charter renewal.

Review Process

- RIDE's rigorous evaluation of charter school performance is guided by three questions:
 - Is the school's educational program an academic success?
 - Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for academic success?
 - Is the school a viable organization?

The first portion of the review – is the school's educational program an academic success? – considers all relevant student outcome measures, including Math and ELA NECAP performance, IDEA SPP indicators, federal Adequate Yearly Progress designations, and, if applicable, ACCESS proficiency and graduation rates.

The second portion of the review – is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success? – gauges the quality of instructional leadership, classroom instruction, and curriculum development and implementation at each school relative to the standards set forth in the Board of Regent's Basic Education Program (BEP). Evidence for this portion of the review is gathered through a three-day site visit and thorough document review.

The third portion of the review – is the school a viable organization? – considers whether or not schools are using public funds responsibly and appropriately. RIDE staff reviews each school's financial audits over the course of the charter term as well as all other relevant documentation on the school's compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.

- The school was required to complete a renewal application. This application provides an opportunity: (1) to present any important new or supplemental information pertaining to the above guiding questions, to enable a more comprehensive assessment of school performance; and (2) to articulate the school's strategies and capacities for sustaining success and continuing to improve over the next charter term.

Key Findings

- The percentage of students proficient in reading has increased over the last four years, and the school has exceeded their sending district and similar schools in percentage of students proficient in reading [See Attachment 1].
- ACE has consistently failed to educate their students in math. As measured by NECAP, the school's math programs have significantly underperformed the school's sending district (PPSD) in every year that data is available and similar schools in 2011. None (0%) of ACE's 11th graders were proficient in math according to the 2011 NECAP.
- ACE has failed to provide systematic instructional supports for students in the area of math, all of whom are struggling and none of whom have reached the level of 'proficient' on the 2011 state assessment.
- Our review indicates that the school does not have many of the internal systems and structures necessary to measurably improve achievement of its students in all content areas:
 - Overall, the school's administrative and board leadership has not provided oversight for student learning and continuous improvement over the life of the school's latest charter term as defined by the student academic goals in the Charter Performance Review Handbook:
 - The board has not provided strong oversight in key areas, including tools for monitoring progress towards board-established goals, school leader accountability, academic and fiscal oversight;
 - The school leader does not have formal policy or clear and operationalized procedures for key areas of the school's administration, including curriculum development and revision, professional development, and fiscal oversight; and

- The school's curriculum is incomplete, and the school has no formal process for review and revision of curricula.
- For each of the previous fiscal years audited, ACE Charter School has received an opinion from its auditor that states that the school's financial reports meet generally accepted accounting principles and fairly represent the financial position of the school.

THEREFORE, IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education determine that the Academy for Career Exploration Charter School's charter be allowed to expire at the end of the current charter term pursuant to the Board of Regents' Regulations Governing Public Charter Schools C-4-3 and R.I.G.L. 16-77-5.1.

In the event of an administrative hearing pursuant to Subsection (c) of R.I.G.L. 16-77-5.1, the Board of Regents shall defer rendering a final determination of action until the conclusion of the administrative hearing process.

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Attachment 1:

Student Performance Relative to Sending District and Similar Schools

ACE					
		2007-2008 TcY	2008-2009 TcY	2009-2010 TcY	2010-2011 TcY
Proficiency Level	Reading	51.80%	68.80%	78.80%	83.00%
	Math	3.60%	2.10%	9.40%	0.00%
1.1 Sending District	Reading	Above Typical	Above Typical	Above Typical	Above Typical
	Math	Below Typical	Below Typical	Below Typical	Below Typical
1.2 Similar Schools	Reading	Typical	Typical	Above Typical	Above Typical
	Math	Typical	Typical	Typical	Below Typical
1.5 AYP		Insufficient Progress	Insufficient Progress	Insufficient Progress	MET

Proficiency Level = ACE School Proficiency Levels

Sending District = A weighted average of a school's sending district(s)' proficiency levels. ACE draws students from Providence.

Similar Schools = An estimate of the proficiency level of Rhode Island schools with similar numbers of ELL, SPED, and FRPL students as ACE.